



The Bethel Courier.

Volume VI, Number 1

Spring, 1982

Bethel Historical Society



"The Park" c. 1900

PARK STREET

By Rosalind Rowe Chapman

Park Street, or Kimball Park, so called, was named for Ira Crocker Kimball (1816-1866) one of Bethel's most prominent citizens. He was also one of the town's first traders, his store being at the north portion of the block of stores which were on the site of the Bethel Fire Station. He lived at the north end of the common, and his land bordered the area which ultimately became "The Park."

Following the building of the Atlantic and St. Lawrence Railway in 1851, there was a sudden and extensive interest in the construction of both residential and commercial buildings on the "Hill".

During the decade of the 1850's it was realized that new streets would have to be laid out, and Mr. Kimball made plans to open a street, forming a square which would enter and exit by both the churches on Church Street.

The land immediately behind the Universalist Church (present Nazarene) was sold in November, 1856 to Ira Crocker Kimball and Daniel Twitchell for \$130. According to the deed, the southern side of it bordered on Walker's Street and the western side on "the back street." Since James Walker, one of the early settlers at one time had owned the land north of the common, this land would have included the site of the street.

In the Oxford County Atlas of 1858, the twin houses (joined, but two separate buildings) on the above-mentioned lot appear

as the only houses on the square, having been completed the previous year. Deeds for the houses show that Mr. Kimball assumed the ownership of the one nearest the Universalist Church (now Nazarene) and Mr. Twitchell the other.

1. The Kimball house was subsequently sold to M. A. Freeman. Other owners have been H. S. Pushard (Mr. Pushard, the druggist, had a store on Main St.), Fred Wood, whose widow ran a boarding house, Mrs. Edith Grover, Melvin Tenney, Walter Kittredge, John E. Grover, George Nickerson, Robert Emmons, Amanda Bowers, and Thomas Remington. About 1930 the house was remodeled to include two apartments. Others living here have included Fitz Vail, Harold Nutting, Elton Coolidge, S. T. Tripp, families of Foster and Bean, Belle Hamlin, Alberta Croteau, Ivon Favreau, Gemma Morrill, Brenda Long, Fred Stanley, and Clayton Bane.

2. In 1862, Daniel Twitchell sold to Frank Rowell, but because of Mr. Rowell's financial hardship the property reverted in 1863 to Mr. Twitchell's widow, Cyrene. In 1867, Mrs. Twitchell sold to J. Alden Smith. His widow, Amy Smith sold to Lydia Livermore, who in turn sold it in 1886 to Ceylon Rowe. *The Oxford County Advertiser* stated, Sept. 17, 1886: "Ceylon Rowe has purchased the house and lot lately vacated by David Bridge and is making extensive repairs, such as a street walk of split stone, front veranda, new shingling, painting inside and outside, etc. The house is to be occupied by Frank Rich of Rumford Corner, who has sold out there and moved to Bethel."

After Mr. Rich moved, it was occupied by Scott Wight, and later by the Misses Beulah and Stella Bartlett, who specialized in photography of children. In December, 1906, Mr. Rowe deeded the property to his son, Herbert C. Rowe. The Rowes lived here until 1923 when they sold to Mrs. Rowe's sister, Miss Cleo Russell who was postmaster from 1922 to 1933. While Miss Russell owned it, families living there were those of True Eames and Mac Crea. Also Mrs. Ethel Hastings and son, Henry

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**FAYE TAYLOR
MEMORIAL ART SHOW
MAY 29
10 to 4**

**DR. MOSES MASON
BIRTHDAY PARTY
MAY 30
2 to 4 p.m.**

lived here a short time after they sold their house on Church Street. The Herbert R. Rowe family was here from 1937 to 1942. After Miss Russell's death in 1958 it became the property of the Franklin S. Chapman family who lived here until 1977 when they sold to Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Hutchinson, the present owners.

3. The Dana Brooks house was one of two which Mr. Kimball had built in 1861, the other one being that of Elgin Tibbetts across "The Park." An observer will notice that the "ginger-bread" trim on the gables of the houses are identical. The Brooks house became the home of Albert Gerrish upon completion. He was one of the operators of the Bethel Steam Mill. Others living here during Mr. Kimball's ownership included Rev. D. Warren Hardy, minister of the West Parish Congregational Church, and F. M. Coffin. Recorded in the *Oxford Advertiser*, June 25, 1889 is: "S. D. Philbrook purchased the Kimball house on the park and is doing extensive repairs." On April 14, 1891 the same publication stated that "S. D. Philbrook is repairing the house on Park St. occupied by F. M. Coffin." He then sold it to Timothy Carter. Members of the Carter family lived here until the early forties. They were followed by the Francis Noyes family who were here until the house was sold in 1946 to Mr. and Mrs. Dana Brooks.

4. The house below the Brooks house owned by Mrs. Richard Bush of Belmont, Mass. was built by John Phillips. The *Oxford Democrat* reported on Oct. 25, 1867: "Dr. J. A. Morton has bought the house of John Phillips on Park St." Dr. Morton had come recently to replace Dr. Collins. Upon Dr. Morton's death it became the property of the Alphonse Van Den Kerckhoven. The Vans were here until 1921 when they built the house, green house and telephone office on Elm Street. It was at this time that Edward P. Lyon purchased the property. Mr. Lyon for many years owned and operated Lyon's Jewelry Store where he carried a full line of ladies' furnishings, gifts, etc., as well as clocks, watches and jewelry. He also did watch and clock repairing in conjunction with the business. Mrs. Bush, Mr. Lyon's daughter, retains the property which she and her family use as a summer home. Living here in recent years have been Mr. and Mrs. Harry Kuzyk, Albert Foy, Mrs. Helen Jacobs, Mrs. Jessie Chapman and daughter, Annette, Dr. and Mrs. James Hudson, the Cage family, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel McCoy, and Mr and Mrs. Clayton Bane.

5. Dennis Wheeler's house was built by Asa Knight, a boot and shoe maker. Even though the Knights moved to Washington, D.C. in 1870 they retained ownership of the property until it was acquired by Ceylon Rowe in 1891 as a rental property. The Charles Russells were here for several years. It was later sold to G. L. Thurston who was engaged in the lumber business, and was also the postmaster in town at one time. After the Thurstons moved from the Park it was rented to Dr. and Mrs. S. S. Greenleaf and family.

Dr. Greenleaf had his funeral home and veterinary office from 1925 to 1932 until he bought the present Greenleaf Funeral home on Vernon St. in 1932. Homer Smith later lived there as well. Edward Hanscom purchased the house in the early 1930's but was here only a few years. P. H. Chadbourne and family were here briefly and so were the Asa Bartletts. In the mid-forties it was acquired by Isaac Dyer, local lawyer. When the Dyers moved away in 1950 they sold to George Taylor. Mr. Taylor died in 1958 but Mrs. Taylor kept the home until her death in 1972. It was sold soon after to John Carlson who had a dental laboratory here. The Carlsons moved away in 1978 and the house was vacant until 1981 when Dennis Wheeler purchased it. Mr. Wheeler is currently making extensive repairs and renovations upon it.

6. The Donald Bennett house was one of the two matching houses built as rental units by William Hastings in 1890. At the turn of the century the Prof. F. E. Hanscom family were living here. They moved in 1905 to a Gould Academy house on Church Street. Eugene Van, the photographer, as well as Rufus Skillings and family lived here for many years. After the death of Mrs. Skillings the house was purchased by Fred Hamlin of Berlin, N.H. Mrs. Hamlin sold to Harold Rolfe in 1950. The Rolfes renovated it completely and lived here until 1961 when they purchased the property adjoining, formerly owned by the Bartletts. At that time they sold to State Trooper William Bickford. Others here have been Dwayne Lambert, the Dowseys, Rev. Gross, Phil Taylor, Christian Verbeke and Larry Snyder.

7. The Rolfe house, the second house that William Hastings had built, was rented to Mr. and Mrs. Edward Herrick who eventually bought it. Mr. Herrick was a machinist and was in business with his brother, Al, owning and operating Herrick Bros. Garage. He also was an excellent musician having organized and played with the Herrick Family Orchestra for several years.

After Mr. Herrick's death in 1945 the house was sold to Asa Bartlett. The Bartletts were here until Mr. Bartlett died. In 1961, Harold Rolfe obtained it and did much remodeling before the family moved in. Mr. Rolfe added a garage with apartment above where there have been many tenants including the Wheelers, Mrs. Churchill, James Dock, Russell Palmer, and others. In 1981 the Rolfe's moved to Sudbury Village and their son, Phillip, and his family are occupying the premises.

8. The Tibbetts house, one of the two built by Ira Kimball when "The Park" was opened, was first occupied by William Gerrish, who with his brother, Albert operated the Bethel Steam Mill. The family was here but a short time, and in 1867, after the death of Mr. Kimball, the house was sold by his son, Melville, to Samuel W. Kilbourne, who was a carpenter. The next owner, Mary J. Clark, sold to Marshall Sanderson. After the deaths of the Sandersons it became the property of W. W. Hastings. While he owned it, it was occupied by the E. B. Jackson family, later by George L. Merrill, manager of the spool and dowel mill. E. C. Bowler, owner and publisher of the Bethel News, once lived here as well. F. E. Russell, who came to Bethel in 1920 and was superintendent of Bethel schools for several years, was the next owner. Mrs. Russell was the organist of the West Parish Congregational Church. Their son, Richard, inherited the house and sold it in 1952 to the Elgin K. Tibbetts family, the present owners.

9. The Tibbetts Boarding Home was built in 1861 by Pat McCloskey. The first occupants were a family by the name of Johnson. In 1864 it was sold to Ceylon Rowe, who had a general store on the site of the present Bethel Fire Station. In 1922 his son, Herbert C., who had joined him in the store business, had the house renovated and the family occupied it. After the death of Mrs. Rowe in 1948 it was made into two apartments, Herbert R. Rowe and family occupying one and the Franklin Chapman family the other.

When the Chapmans moved in 1958 the apartment was used as rental housing for N. T. L. In 1978 Mr. Rowe sold the property to Mr. and Mrs. Elgin Tibbetts. Mrs. Tibbetts has had it renovated and made suitable for a boarding home for the elderly.

10. The Kailey house appears on the *Oxford County Atlas* of 1880 as owned by Truman Crosby. It is reputed to have been built by John Rowe in the 1860's. According to the *Advertiser*, August 25, 1887: "Truman Crosby of Norway is making arrangements to sell his stand on Kimball Park to Timothy Chapman." In the same publication, August 20, 1899: "John M. Freeman has bargained for the Crosby stand near Kimball Park." After

Mr. Freeman's death it was owned by Miss Emma Clough. During her tenure it was rented by Edward Lyon and family who were here until 1921. Frank King, a nephew of Miss Clough, bought it after her death. Mr. King was the manager of the nursery for the forestry department of the Brown Company at Berlin, N.H. After his death the property was sold in 1937 to Arnold Childs who owned and managed the mill at Skillingston.

P. H. Chadbourne was the next owner and he sold to Gould Academy in 1941. That same year the Edmond Vachons rented the house and remained here until their home on Paradise Road was completed. Among those living here while the house was used for Gould faculty were Walter Marcuse and Richard Barbour. In 1958 the Academy sold to Paul and Jean Kailey, the current owners.

OXFORD COUNTY HISTORIC RESOURCE SURVEY FUNDED AGAIN

This spring the Society received word from the Maine Historic Preservation Commission and the National Park Service that it has been awarded a grant to continue the Oxford County Historic Resource Survey. George Allen, who was the project director in the previous phase, has been retained to direct the project. He will be joined by Randall H. Bennett of Rumford to work with volunteers from historical societies throughout Oxford County to insure that the sites and buildings included in the published inventory are those most typical and significant.

NEW LIFE MEMBER

Hope B. Tibbetts, Bethel. Mrs. Tibbetts has been a sustaining member for a number of years as well as a generous donor.

IN MEMORIAM

Died January 21, 1982, Doris R. Hutchins of Bethel, devoted member and wife of Society member James E. Hutchins.

Died March 8, 1982, Leona Lurvey of Hanover, Maine, loyal member and generous donor to the Society.

Died March 27, 1982, Albert L. Johnson of Westford, Massachusetts, life member of the Society and husband of life member Charlotte Kendall Johnson.

SOCIETY MEMBERS (as of May, 1982)

HONORARY

Mrs. Pearl Ashby Tibbetts, Bethel

LIFE

Lt. Gen. & Mrs. James D. Alger, Bethel; Mr. & Mrs. Kimball Ames, Bethel; Mr. John E. Auchmoody, Bryant Pond; Mr. Charles M. Austin, Naples, Maine & Orlando, Florida; Mr. Arthur E. Barker, Stafford Springs, Conn.; Mr. Clarence A. Bartlett, Nashua, N.H.; Mrs. Florine E. Bowden, Smithfield, RI; Mrs. Dorothy F. Brinck, South Paris; Mr. Richard N. Bryant, Bethel; Mr. & Mrs. Philip H. Chadbourne, Bethel; Lt. Col. & Mrs. Norman Clanton, Bethel; Mrs. Isabel T. Coburn, Portland; Mr. & Mrs. Howard Cole, Bethel; Mr. & Mrs. Wilfred G. Conary, Bethel; Mr. & Mrs. Rupert D. Conroy, Reading, MA; Mrs. Kathryn M. Eames, Cape Elizabeth; Mr. & Mrs. Donald Eddy, Bethel; Mr. & Mrs. Clifford Ellis, Oxford; Mr. & Mrs. Gordon Gillies, Bethel; Mrs. Lillian H. Grant, Gorham; Mr. & Mrs. John T. Grover, Bethel; Mr. John E. Grover, Bethel; Mr. & Mrs. Ralph Hall, Bethel; Mrs. Annie Hastings,
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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

"Inch by inch life's a cinch," goes a jingle of contemporary philosophy. "Inch by inch," week by week, this society grows not only in members but in physical artifacts and historical documents. Just like a ripening grape whose growing pains at summer's end may cause its skin to burst, the Moses Mason Museum is soon to reach that point where the physical plant is no longer adequate.

One can squeeze only so much into the meeting room which is becoming an increasingly active facility of the museum. It does disservice to donors of artifacts and documents if the society cannot make them reasonably available to all members and visitors either through a well-arranged archives or through prepared exhibits. However, to provide such a service the society should start thinking about expanding the museum with some type of additional building.

Many can remember the time when acquiring Dr. Mason's house was only a dream well beyond the financial resources of the Society. Yet plans come from dreams and from plans came the reality of the museum as it is today. Along with the concept of expanding the physical size of the museum, one must also consider another vitally needed element of expansion: adding another full time staff member. We have been very fortunate in attracting able volunteers so far. But the momentum of growth seems to be with us and to manage that development as well as to make full effective use of our potential requires human power.

As our interest in our cultural heritage deepens and broadens "inch by inch" so also does our responsibility to provide for communicating this growing cornucopis of historical fruit to the public.

Donald G. Bennett

SOCIETY TO HOST MAINE OLD CEMETERY ASSOCIATION

On May 22, 1982 the Society will host the spring meeting of the Maine Old Cemetery Association at the Moses Mason House. President Donald G. Bennett will welcome the group to Bethel. Scheduled speakers include Society Board of Trustees Chairman Margaret Joy Tibbetts and Director, Stanley Howe.

EDITOR'S CORNER

It is perhaps well to bring to the attention of our readers some idea of the recognition this publication receives in state and national circles. It is regularly cited in the section "Writings in Maine History" of the *Maine Historical Society Quarterly* and is frequently quoted in *Maine History News*, the quarterly newsletter of the Maine League of Historical Societies and Museums. As an example of the *Courier's* national significance, it is listed in *America: History and Life*, a noteworthy bibliographic series. But the most gratifying is perhaps the many requests the Society receives for back issues of this newsletter. We will continue to provide them to anyone wishing one or more as long as the supply lasts. Those of the earlier period are largely gone but ones of a more recent vintage are still available. Anyone wishing one should direct inquiries to the Society office.

SRH

BETHEL'S ELUSIVE ANDROSCOGGIN STEAMBOAT

By Randall H. Bennett

"I know of no place in the United States where as varied and rich scenery can be witnessed as when on the Androscoggin . . . every fifty rods for the whole distance will exhibit a different landscape worthy the attention of the painter. Its appearance is very different when on the water, as it meanders along its broad intervals, from what it is on its banks." Thus spoke one writer in a January 1859 edition of the original *Bethel Courier* (1858-61).

The unsigned article in which this appeared was undoubtedly written by the *Courier's* Editor and one of the most enthusiastic promoters of Bethel's scenic grandeur, Dr. Nathaniel Tuckerman True (see Vol. 1, No. 2, June 1977, *The Bethel Courier*).

The reemergence of canoeing on the Androscoggin of late, especially over the relatively calm stretch of river between Gilead and Rumford Falls, goes far to reveal that various aspects of the countryside are strikingly different from the water than when viewed from U.S. Route 2 or the East Bethel road and the South Rumford road further downstream. It may not come as a surprise then that the idea of river travel by steamer was not lost to local entrepreneurs over a century ago, Dr. True included. Unfortunately, though records seem to substantiate the actual existence of a Rumford-to-Bethel steamboat(s) on the River sometime between 1888 and 1894, both oral tradition and secondary printed sources have indicated other, earlier boats, as well as accounts for which no contemporary records can be found. This article is an attempt to summarize what is known on the subject; as a starting point for further research, it is hoped this information will allow future historians to elaborate even further on what role steamboat travel played in Bethel's nineteenth century commercial history.

Beginning in January of 1859, Dr. True began a lengthy series of articles not only promoting the construction of a steamer, but describing such an event and the hoopla surrounding the numerous excursions from "Alder River Wharf" to downstream landings at Newry Corner, Hanover, Andover and Rumford Falls. Despite the fact that navigation on the River was influenced more in the middle nineteenth century by water released at dams in the Umbagog region (today's huge downriver dams had not been built, thus slowing the flow), even the everpresent hazard of logs and rocks did not preclude travel during certain periods on the stretch between Bethel and Rumford.

True wrote in one of his early articles, "Suppose the cars arrive in the morning either way at Bethel, let passengers step on board the little sternwheel steamer, proceed down to Rumford Falls where are the highest in New England, and well worth the visit, because the traveler would have something to see all the way along." He continued, "I have been told that there is nothing in the whole distance to obstruct the passage of a boat, but that might be removed at a trifling expense. Such a boat should be small and expressly designed for travelers whose object is pleasure; and there is no question but that it would pay good interest to the owners."

In these first articles, True was quick to point out the advantages to Bethel Hill with its newly opened station of the Grand Trunk Railroad, and he went as far as to advise the construction of a new hotel somewhere near the Common. In fact, so detailed are True's writings on the subject that the twentieth century reader has few reasons not to accept them verbatim. One more example may prove worthy of note.

In late July, 1859 the following piece appeared in the *Courier*:

"A Trip Down the Androscoggin — Receiving an invitation from Captain Sampson of the new steamboat, 'Pioneer,' we went on board at her station in Bethel, at the mouth of Alder River, about a hundred rods from the Depot. We were surprised to find that a wharf and warehouse had been built for her accommodation. As soon as the cars arrived from Portland in the morning, the boat got underway. We had on board a party from Boston, who, with their friends in Portland, numbering about 40 persons, made up the company.

"It was a lovely morning; the shadows fell thick on the mountains, giving them a dark, rich hue. As the boat swung out into the river, the scene was most enchanting. Exclamations of delight came from every soul on board as one after another contemplated the scene. The beautiful and well-cultivated intervals, the little village across the river, the distant mountains, all combined to furnish a charming prospect.

"Passing down the Narrows, Capt. Sampson pointed out to us Powow Point, where the Indians formerly held their councils. The Captain has many legends connected with this spot, with which he entertains the passengers during the trip. Here the river runs slowly for a mile directly north, then turns at right angles to the east, a beautiful prospect from the boat.

"Soon the boat arrived at the rapids at the mouth of Bear River, over which she glided in the most graceful manner possible. A few, large rocks have been removed, which renders the navigation perfectly safe. The boat, having landed some passengers on their way to the Lakes, started again on her course. Soon the splendid intervals of Hanover and Bethel, at Middle Intervale, appeared in view. They present a more beautiful aspect from a boat than from the land.

"The scenery along here is wild, various and rich beyond description. Having arrived at Rumford, the Captain had a little difficulty in getting the boat beneath the rope of the Ferry in consequence of some neglect on the part of the Ferry Company.

"Having landed some freight at Rumford and Andover and taking on some passengers, we went on down the current at a delightful rate, the boat being under the control of Mr. Newbegin, a skillful pilot, who knows every rod of the river. Arriving at Rumford Falls we received a national salute for each state in the Union, under the direction of Gen. Bolster. A collation was served up by the ladies in the village. The party examined the Falls which are the largest in New England, tumbling over a precipice 80 feet.

"The boat having taken her freight, started on her return. The current in the river is quite strong in some places, but skillful piloting carried her along with perfect ease. Fears were entertained that she would not ascend the rapids at Bear River, but she glided over them like a swan."

Later pieces in the *Courier* mention the steamer visiting the Anasagunticook House in Northwest Bethel and landing in Shelburne and Gorham, New Hampshire to take on passengers and freight. In adding that the Grand Trunk had agreed to purchase one-half the stock in the steamboat company, True appended in one article, "At least so we dreamed yesterday after lunch." A list of vessels at Bethel Hill printed in December 1859 seems to substantiate the fact that Dr. True's writings were all fictitious — "One Bateaux, One Punt, One Ferryboat and NO Steamboat!"

Clear evidence disproving any claim of an 1859 steamer at Bethel also exists in the form of a poem written by George Whitefield Chapman, son of Rev. Eliphaz Chapman and author of a *History of Gilead* published in 1867. In this small book made up of several historical sketches and acrostic poems appeared the following:

"THE GREAT EASTERN

Doctor, I've just review'd your trip,—
From Alder wharf, to Rumford Ripples,
And back, with Sampson for your guide,
To Berlin Falls, the height of tide.

But what of this, will e'er be said,—
Compared with mine from Holy Head?
Board the Great Eastern, on her race,
With forty rods of deck to pace!

With strength and grace she plumes along,
With passengers five thousand strong;
Grand Dukes and Lords, the very best,
And 'Deacon George' among the rest!

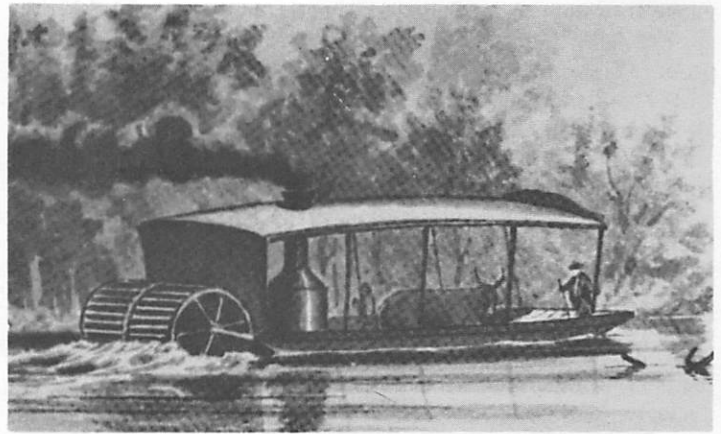
She cuts her way with strength and pride,
All lesser crafts with ease outrides;
She gains the city, Portland fair,
Long side its wharf, and anchors there.

Grand engine, boiler, masts, and sails;
Grand flag inscribed, 'direct from Wales!'
To rouse the city, taps her steam,
And mine, as yours, was all a dream!"

As a footnote, Chapman ended with a paragraph of explanation: "Written after I was blind, and hearing read an article in the *Bethel Courier*, by Dr. N. T. True, describing an imaginary trip in a visionary steamer, from Alder Wharf, Bethel to Rumford Ripples, and back again, up the river to Berlin Falls, on the bosom of the Androscoggin River; and his assertion, in the same paper, that 'Deacon George' had 'gone to Portland to see the Great Eastern.'"

Between the time of True's writings and the appearance of the "Androscoggin Steamboat Company" in 1888, two major references to steam navigation on the Androscoggin can be verified through accounts in the *Oxford County Democrat* and other weeklies that covered the western half of the State. The first concerns what may be the earliest attempt to travel by steam on Androscoggin waters. The "Androscoggin Steam Navigation Company" was incorporated in 1853 and according to one source was to have exclusive navigation rights from Canton Point to Rumford Falls for a twenty-five year period. The Company issued a capital of \$50,000. and engaged Hiram Ricker of Poland Spring to support construction of the sidewheeler "The Surprise." On its maiden voyage, the boat's machinery failed and the vessel nearly capsized. Living up to its name, the steamer was soon reported as having its engine powering a nearby mill. Needless to say, its stockholders must have suffered greatly.

Both newspaper accounts and an important manuscript dated 1861, now in the collections of Bangor Public Library, substantiate the existence of a steamer on the upper reaches of the Androscoggin and the Magalloway River during the 1860's. Interspersed throughout the manuscript by Marshall M. Tidd (reprinted in part in *Appalachia Journal*, Dec. 1957 and June 1958) are many hand-colored drawings of scenes from a trip Tidd made from Bethel to the "Androscoggin Lakes" region. Among these are choice views of Poplar Tavern, the mill at Screw Auger Falls and most importantly, the stern-paddlewheel steamer, the "Union." Launched at Upton in 1861, the "Union" was the first in a succession of steamboats that carried sportsmen and pleasure parties to and from the Umbagog region fishing and hunting grounds (On August 4, 1891 the *Democrat* reported the arrival in Bethel by train of a small steamboat from Portland destined for Umbagog).



The steamer "Union," on the Androscoggin River.

Though pictorial record is surprisingly absent, the existence of two local steamboats and the operations of the "Androscoggin Steamboat Company" organized as "common carriers of passengers and freight on the Androscoggin River from Bethel to Rumford Falls" in June of 1888 certainly deserve mention.

The late Eva M. Bean, in her book *East Bethel Road*, writes, "Algeron S. Chapman in his diary dated Oct. 8, 1888, said, 'A steamer came from Rumford today and turned about at Dr. Gordon's intervalle (Alder River Bridge) and then returned. It was built by a Rumford and Hanover company of citizens.'" Indeed, a company of men, led by several from the two aforementioned towns, namely Charles A. Kimball, J. B. Roberts and Charles W. Kimball, organized capital enough to encourage the construction of the "Pioneer" which was built by James C. Elliott and launched in August of 1888. According to one account, the steamboat was described as twenty feet long, over seven wide, with a flat bottom and a stern wheel. When "properly fixed," the boat would provide eighty pounds of steam pressure from a six horse-power engine, would be capable of reaching five miles per hour, and could safely carry up to twenty passengers in less than two feet of water. From this description, it is plausible that the "Union," operating further up the River, may have served as a model for the "Pioneer's" construction. Whether the name of the vessel was derived from Dr. True's earlier writings is not certain.

So successful was the 1888 operation that by March of 1889 another even larger steamer was proposed. This, the "North Star," nearly fifty feet long and capable of carrying fifty passengers, was launched from the Hanover ferry landing that summer and on its trial trip made it to the docking site at Alder River.

Researchers will find many gaps apparent at this point, with the Company turned over completely to three of the original investors, while the engine from the "Pioneer" was said to have been transferred to the newer vessel. Contrary to secondary sources which state the "Pioneer" caught fire while being fired up in 1890, the *Advertiser* of May 23, 1890 says, in part, "The steamer . . . was burned at Rumford Point last Sunday. . . the man who burned the boat crossed the ferry and went up to the steamer . . . and set a piece of canvas on fire . . . another fellow was with him and said, 'Stop, you will have the boat all on fire.' I don't care if I do," was the reply, 'I own as much as anybody in this boat.' Mun Wormell of Bethel, was put on his track and found him out very quickly; probably a dear fire for him."

The burning of the "Pioneer" began a series of events that soon saw the steamboat company heavily in debt. Though the "North Star" under Captain A. G. Howe is reported to have

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made trips daily from Bethel Hill to Hastings' Ferry (also known as Kendall's Ferry and located just downriver of the present Route 2 scenic turnout), the continual hazard of annual log drives on the Ellis and Androscoggin, coupled with severe droughts in the summers of 1892 and '93, greatly hindered its use. Add to this the fact that the "Rips" at Newry Corner could only be negotiated at high water, and it was predictable that one should find the steamer "drydocked for an unlimited time" in May of 1894. Though several of our oldest residents still claim to have seen her on the River, the fate of the "North Star" still remains unexplained.

Today, the expanse of scenery once enjoyed from the deck of Bethel's steamer has changed little. Perhaps this is why one can recreate, with only the smallest amount of imagination, this grandiose and yet often overlooked chapter in Bethel's history.

BOOK REVIEW

Gordon M. Day, *The Identity of the Saint Francis Indians* (Ottawa: Museum of Man, 1981)

This scholarly work is not bedtime reading for those with a casual interest in local history, but is a most valuable addition to the sources available to one with a serious concern with the Indians of New England and Eastern Canada, as well as to the student of 17th and 18th century American history. The purpose of Day's book is to explore the origins of the group of Indians centered at the town of Odanak in Quebec between the years of 1670 and the present, who came to be known as the Saint Francis Indians. Through an examination of the written record, genealogy, oral tradition and ethnographic data, Day concludes that the Saint Francis group was made up of Indians of the Sokwaki, Cowassuck, and Penacook tribes of the upper Connecticut and Merrimack valleys in New Hampshire and Vermont, with additions from tribes of the Abenaki groups in Maine, as well as some tribes from the middle Connecticut River valley in Massachusetts.

Day explores, in great detail, the past writings on the subject of the Saint Francis Indians, taking issue with several theories promoted and re-stated for many years. Of particular interest to western Maine historians, is his contention that the Sokwaki tribe, often called Sokoki, was not based in the Saco River area, but actually came from the Connecticut River Valley in New Hampshire. This group appears to have been the first to emigrate to Odanak, and the date of their arrival coincides with Iroquois attacks in the Connecticut River area, as well as documented French missionary contacts in the 1650's.

In the account of Roger's Raid, Day relies on Indian and French accounts which dispute Roger's claim of two hundred Indians killed. Day believes that according to Indian tradition, an Indian member of Roger's party was able to warn the village of the raid, which allowed many to hide. An interesting local note on this subject, is Molly Ockett's account of the event. She was residing at Odanak in 1759, when the raid took place, and claimed to have saved herself by hiding in the bushes. The village was disrupted for ten years after that occurrence.

Odanak continued to fluctuate in population throughout the 18th century, in direct relation to conditions to the south, with Indians from as many as twenty tribal groups taking refuge there during the many colonial wars. Following the American Revolution, most of the Indians from Vermont, New Hampshire and western Maine did relocate at Odanak, with the village taking on its permanent character by 1820.

Of great interest to "Courier" readers will be mention of the

local Indian accounts following the Revolution, including reference to the Indian group at Bethel described in 1772 by Henry Tufts, mention of Molly Ockett, and of the few remaining Indian residents of western Maine and New Hampshire. There are some tantalizing hints of the need for further research in Day's mention of purchase of land holdings in northern New Hampshire by the Eastman Company in 1796 from an Indian, King Philip, whom Day believes to be the "Philip" mentioned as a Sudbury Canada Indian by Tufts twenty years earlier.

Those familiar with this area's history are well acquainted with the life of Molly Ockett, and with her frequent travels to Canada and to northern New Hampshire and Vermont. Gordon Day's book provides, in its thorough account of the Indian history of the area, the reasons for these travels. It is possible that an examination of local sources in northern New Hampshire and Vermont may unearth more Molly Ockett stories, and the bibliography provided in Day's book offers a suggested starting point.

The volume is enhanced by several good maps, an exhaustive bibliography, and good summary sections.

Catherine S-C Newell

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(continued next page)

HOWE SELECTED TO HEAD OXFORD COUNTY LEAGUE

Society Directory Stanley Howe was recently selected to head the newly organized Oxford County League of Historical Societies. Elected as Vice President was Ben Conant of the Paris Cape Historical Society with Mildred Dickson of the Dixfield Society as Secretary-Treasurer. The purpose of the organization, which will meet quarterly around Oxford County, is to promote local history in the area as well as give member societies the opportunity to share information and concerns. Howe was selected as the Bethel Society's delegate last fall when it voted to join the League.

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